STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

OVERSEAS MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY: ENGAGEMENT OR DISENGAGEMENT?

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL ROSS E. RIDGE
United States Army

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LIEUTENANT COLONEL ROSS E. RIDGE
United States Army

Colonel Winfield D. Buzby, Jr.
Project Advisor

U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Lieutenant Colonel Ross E. Ridge

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Overseas military presence has been a key strategic tool in the protection of interests abroad. Military forces demonstrate America's resolve to defend U.S., allied, and friendly interests while ensuring its ability to rapidly concentrate combat power in the event of crisis. As the U.S. enters the 21st Century, the national military objectives--promoting peace and stability, and defeating adversaries as required--remain credible "ends" as the U.S. promotes continued globalization, encounters emerging international threats and identifies new vital interests. This paper argues that overseas military presence as a national security concept has a future in this new strategic environment, but one slightly different from the past. Conversely, a policy of overseas military disengagement does not support current or future national security objectives, and could potentially cause irrevocable harm to U.S. interests and those of its allies. Unfortunately, today's overseas presence approach was designed to meet outdated defense needs thus creating a mismatch between current requirements and resources available. To remain an effective national security instrument, the ways and means of the overseas presence policy need to be brought into proper balance. The U.S. must reorient its overseas military posture to better engage the interests and threats of the new millennium.

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OVERSEAS MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY: ENGAGEMENT OR DISENGAGEMENT?

Overseas military presence is an important aspect of U.S. diplomacy and national security strategy. Until World War II, it was predominately used as a means to protect economic interests and foreign trade, fulfill colonial obligations, and to prevent hostilities from reaching North America. After the Second World War, it was used to contain the Warsaw Pact countries and deter the spread of communism. Since the demise of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, our defense strategy has emphasized the importance of providing a credible overseas presence in peacetime to deter aggression and advance U.S. interests. However, as the recent terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon have shown, the type of targets and threats the United States may encounter in the future are also changing. Emerging rogue states, radical Islamic terrorist groups, and non-state actors if left unchecked could destabilize regions or inflict harm on future American security interests.

Tomorrow's national military strategy will likely pursue new objectives requiring a new defense posture. As such, new demands on peace and security will require the U.S. to re-evaluate its overseas military presence policy to determine its viability in supporting American national strategic goals and objectives in the 21st Century. In addition, future U.S. policy must be flexible enough to deal with the constantly changing technical and geopolitical environments. If the U.S. continues to be guided by its current national interests and its prominent position in world affairs, it must remain continually engaged with its world partners militarily to ensure global stability and prosperity. This paper argues that overseas military presence as a national security concept has a future in this new strategic environment, but one slightly different from the past. Conversely, a policy of overseas military disengagement will not adequately support current or future national security objectives, and could potentially cause irrevocable harm to U.S. interests and those of its allies. Specific focus will be on: recalling the historical significance of overseas presence as part of U.S. defense strategy; reviewing the current policy and how it supports the ends, ways, and means of the national military strategy; evaluating the future direction of the overseas presence policy; discussing the strategic implications of maintaining a forward presence posture versus a reduced overseas military footprint; and recommending some changes to the current overseas military presence posture so it better focuses on meeting future international crises and protection of U.S. interests.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Today's U.S. overseas military presence policy is a product of history and threat-based planning. Throughout the 19th Century, America was self-absorbed in exploring the vast expanses of its continent. With the exception of external trade and border expansion, the U.S. had little interest in the affairs of other countries. Prior to the Second World War, America deployed forces overseas for many purposes short of war. These included "protecting commerce and trade routes, deterring and punishing piracy, enhancing prestige, cultivating relations with foreign governments, restoring order, guaranteeing the collection of debts, and defending American citizens and interests during regional upheavals." [1] Though the beginning of the 20th Century saw a desire by the United States to flex its muscles internationally, the U.S. was primarily focused on promoting American interests in the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific region. As overseas threats against America diminished, the U.S. reverted to its historical isolationist stance. Richard Kugler, a prolific writer on national defense strategy, believes that this was based on the assumption that the U.S. did not have vital interests beyond its boundaries worth defending.[2] With the exception of establishing a security presence in the Pacific (Hawaii, Guam and the Philippines) and Panama, the U.S. pulled its forces back to the continental United States (CONUS) and demobilized its standing army.

World War II was a turning point in U.S. defense policy. At the conclusion of the war, the geopolitical framework was dramatically altered. The U.S. unexpectedly found itself as the preeminent military power and global economic leader. The predominant European and Asian powers that previously provided relative stability and influence throughout the world were in ruins. Politically, economically, and militarily vanquished Germany and Japan lay in ashes. The once influential European colonial empires were financially ruined which led to a decline in their international presence and the subsequent establishment of numerous newly independent nations. In some cases, the power vacuum and lack of a credible balance of power in the region created conditions for instability and a rise in authoritarian and communist governments. It also created the conditions for the rise of external Soviet influence and ultimately to an arms race that lasted for over forty years. The end of the war also saw the establishment of the United Nations with desires "to maintain international peace and security, to develop friendly relations among nations, to cooperate in solving international problems and in promoting respect for human rights, and to be a center for harmonizing the actions of nations."[3]

The increased political, economic, and military responsibilities, as well as the increasing fear of Soviet influence and communist world domination, caused the U.S. to back away from its previous historical trend of isolationism. Reinforced by the North Korean invasion into South

Korea, America changed its long-standing aversion to maintaining a large standing army and participation in alliances. The defense policy that emerged was based on the need for forward-stationed and deployed forces along the rim lands of Eurasia to stem the expansion of Soviet aggression, maintain control of the oceans separating the continental U.S. from its principal allies, and establish strategic nuclear forces to support a mutually assured destruction policy. During the Cold War, U.S. defense strategy and overseas presence policies were primarily guided by "the objectives of containment, deterrence, and escalation control."[4] The key precepts of this strategy were forward defense and later flexible response. Military forces were stationed overseas as a show of force, to serve as a reception station for strategic reserves, and as a deterrent to possible aggression by the Soviet Union. Successive U.S. administrations assumed that forward deployment of American power was indispensable in balancing and countering the geostrategic advantage of the Soviet Union and, to a lesser extent, China. The various bilateral and multi-national alliances established in the decade after World War II were crucially important to the collective defense of the U.S. Based on the superiority of its forward-stationed and deployed forces, naval capabilities, and strategic nuclear forces, the U.S. was able to extend a security umbrella over its allies and provide a framework within which nations in the free world experienced unprecedented rates of economic growth.[5]

With the collapse of the Warsaw Pact alliance and disintegration of the Soviet empire, a change in the national military strategy was required to deal with other potential threats. The loss of the Soviet Union as a threat also made it possible to decrease the U.S. forward-stationed presence in Europe and to initiate downsizing of the military force structure. The post-Cold War environment focused military forces on being prepared to fight adversaries in Northeast Asia and the Persian Gulf and conducting activities overseas to encourage and provide stability for nations--to include former adversaries--so they could develop their fledgling democracies and participate in a free market economy. As a nation, the U.S. also became increasingly involved in peace and humanitarian operations, and served as a catalyst for international involvement in failing states. In 1997 the Clinton Administration's National Security Strategy identified global engagement as its primary imperative and focused on three concepts to support its strategy: shaping, responding, and preparing.[6] In support of that strategy, the National Military Strategy identified the following as its national military objectives: promote peace and stability, and when necessary defeat adversaries that threaten the United States, our interests, or our allies.[7] Overseas presence continued to play a significant role in U.S. defense policy and was one of four military strategic concepts (ways) designated to accomplish those objectives; the others were strategic agility, power projection, and decisive force.[8]

Today, the overseas presence policy uses visible military forces in or near key regions of interest to the United States to support the Nation's military objectives.[9] Overseas presence accomplishes these objectives (ends) in a variety of manners. Besides the important but narrow mission of fighting and winning the Nation's wars, military forces and their activities help shape and respond to the international environment by promoting regional stability; protecting access to critical lines of communication; building relations with foreign militaries; deterring potential aggressors; and if deterrence fails, conducting offensive and defensive military operations to protect or defend U.S. interests.[10] Since the late 1980s, overseas presence has also become a major part in military operations other than war (MOOTW), and includes "embargoes, no-fly-zone enforcement, nation-building, arms control, democratization, and civil-military education."[11]

The resources (means) available to support the overseas presence policy include the use of forward-stationed (permanent) and forward-deployed (temporary) forces, military members on temporary duty, and Security Assistance Teams in a number of key countries. The locations of those forces, the types of deployments they undertake, and the numbers of personnel assigned overseas are the result of deliberate planning under the Joint Strategic Planning System (JSPS).[12] Overseas presence also includes key facilities, bases, and pre-positioned equipment sites located abroad that can serve as staging areas for the reception of forces from CONUS.

QUADRENNIAL DEFENSE REVIEW: 2001

How has overseas presence changed under the Bush Administration? Unfortunately, at the time of this study President Bush had not published a new National Security Strategy or National Military Strategy. However, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld did release the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) in September 2001. Though not a replacement for the desired security strategy documents, the QDR did highlight the Administration's future defense and overseas presence initiatives. Similar to the Clinton Administration's engagement policy, the document stated that the number one purpose of the military is to defend the Nation from attack. The QDR did not back away from the two major theaters of war (MTW) strategy, but it did emphasize that the central objective of the review was to shift the U.S. from a threat-based model for defense planning to a capabilities-based model. The intent is to focus more on "how an adversary might fight rather than specifically whom the adversary might be or where a war might occur."[13] It further outlined a strategic framework built around four defense policy goals: assuring allies and friends; dissuading future military competition; deterring threats and coercion against U.S. interests; and if deterrence fails, decisively defeating any adversary.[14] Overseas military presence will be key in accomplishing these goals.

In the document, the Bush Administration stated that a critical component of its defense strategy is the promoting and strengthening of its alliances and partnerships with allies and friends. This assures them that the U.S. will honor its obligations, thus serving as an enabler in establishing stability within that particular region. The presence of American forces overseas is one of the most profound symbols of that commitment. By maintaining regional stability and promoting security cooperation, it potentially dissuades future military competition among countries and creates favorable balances of military power within that critical region. The stability generated by this security cooperation serves as an important link in establishing favorable diplomatic and economic conditions between the U.S. and those countries in the region, and also serves as a vehicle for advancing common goals and interests. The military implications in cultivating and maintaining these alliances and partnerships are equally demanding. To ensure all parties can collectively meet their security and interoperability requirements, U.S. forces must train with the allies in peacetime as they would operate in war. [15]

As a superpower and global partner, the U.S. has important geopolitical interests around the world. To protect those interests, the President of the United States must have military forces capable of imposing the will of the U.S. on any adversary. Though the Bush Administration's defense strategy calls for increased power-projection capability, it also emphasizes the need for regionally tailored forces forward-stationed and deployed in Europe, Northeast Asia, the East Asian littoral, and the Persian Gulf region to assure allies and friends, ensure access to the sea and air lanes, and deter aggression against its forces, allies, and friends.[16]

OVERSEAS MILITARY PRESENCE: EVALUATING ITS VIABILITY FOR THE FUTURE

For the moment, the QDR indicates that forward-stationed forces are essential for the defense of America, but what about the future? To defend America and its interests from external threats in spite of the challenges that the new millennium may bring is the fundamental test for future U.S. defense strategists. The underlying question is whether the military overseas presence policy currently in effect meets the demands for the 21st Century or should the U.S. decrease its forward military presence and force other countries to assume a larger part of the burden? In order to answer this question, it is helpful to understand how the strategic environment shapes U.S. defense strategy.

Webster's Dictionary defines strategy as "...the science and art of employing the political, economic, psychological, and military forces of a nation or group of nations to afford the maximum support to adopted policies in peace or war..." [17] In military strategy, the element of

force is the characteristic which differentiates this process from other rational processes. There are four major variables that consistently contribute to the development of defense strategy: national interests and objectives, resources, public opinion, and the threat.[18]

WHAT ARE OUR NATIONAL INTERESTS AND OBJECTIVES?

In the process of formulating national security strategy, the initial step taken by decision makers is determining national interests and objectives. Yet the definition of national security varies as the national leadership and perception of threat changes. Interests and objectives are derived from a process in which the country's elected leaders determine what is important to ensure the survival of the homeland and the political and economic prosperity of the Nation. National interests can be viewed as the country's desired end-state and further identified by priorities--vital, important, and peripheral or humanitarian. The establishment of interests and objectives is a subtle and shifting process that has an important impact upon force structures, employment doctrine, and grand strategy.

Since the founding of America, the U.S. has embraced several interests derived from the preamble of the Constitution: sovereignty and independence of the United States; protection of Americans, both at home and abroad; prosperity of the Nation and its people; and democracy and human rights. [19] From these guiding interests, various national objectives emerge:

> "protecting the sovereignty, territory, and population of the United States, and preventing and deterring threats to our homeland,...; preventing the emergence of a hostile regional coalition or hegemon; ensuring freedom of the seas and security of international sea lines of communication, airways, and space; ensuring uninhibited access to key markets, energy supplies, and strategic resources; deterring and, if necessary, defeating aggression against U.S. allies and friends." [20]

I believe that these national interests and objectives are still valid today and will continue to drive U.S. defense policy into the 21st Century. So what should the government focus on when developing a national security policy? Richard Kugler argues that the national security policy should always be anchored in national interests. His rationale is that "interests transcend the disappearance of specific enemies, and carry over from one era to the next regardless of how international and domestic conditions might change."[21] Although future U.S. military strategy will be influenced by domestic requirements, it will also be shaped by how American interests are affected by developments abroad. As in the recent past, America's interests will continue to have a global focus, thereby compelling U.S. defense strategists to remain engaged in critical regions that have a direct bearing on its security and economic interests. The U.S. should remain concerned not only about protecting its borders, offshore waters, and the

Western Hemisphere from foreign threats, but also about areas that directly affect its economy--such as access to the maritime sea-lanes, air corridors, and international commercial markets. Clearly future domestic prosperity will be based upon America's ability to participate in a healthy world economy.

The various political, economic, and military alliances that the U.S. has with other nations provide regional stability thus enhancing international markets and allowing America to attain an unprecedented amount of global influence. With strategic security concerns now diminishing and world economies rising in importance, America finds itself in the unprecedented position of serving as the lead nation in maintaining order and stability throughout the world. In the future, U.S. military forces may be required to defend access to strategic resources, or to rebuff direct threats to U.S. economic assets, commercial sea-lanes and airways, and trade relationships by a hostile coalition or regional threat. Whether the U.S. will defend its economic interests with the same fervor accorded to previous vital strategic interests is an open question. The answer will depend on whether adversarial nations or non-state actors threaten or directly attack these interests, and the subsequent impact that such actions might have on the U.S. economy.[22]

Use of military forces to defend U.S. interests is likely to be manifested in several ways. At a minimum, a powerful incentive exists to preserve the military alliances in Europe and Northeast Asia "to help maintain a cooperative economic climate and to ensure that U.S. business investments in these regions are not threatened by new adversaries."[23] American military forces may be employed on behalf of these interests or forward-stationed to maintain a balance of power within that region. The prevention of sectarian or regional conflict, the eradication of terrorist safe-havens, and the interdiction of drug trafficking routes are areas which will preoccupy forces in the next decade as the U.S. attempts to prevent the spread of threats to more important areas. The need to manage these future crises, as well as prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the spread of terrorism, could pull the U.S. into military involvements in regions that otherwise would be deemed less than vital, and even peripheral.

FORWARD-STATIONED AND DEPLOYED MILITARY FORCES

Resources are one of the major elements setting constraints or opening opportunities for the achievement of national objectives. From a military perspective, U.S. overseas presence has fallen from an average of 520,000 military personnel either stationed or deployed abroad in the 1980s to approximately 235,000 today, costing about $10 to $15 billion annually.[24] In recent years, approximately 35,000 of these personnel were involved in contingency operations, mostly

in the Middle East and the Balkans, while another 50,000 sailors and marines were continuously afloat in foreign waters. The U.S. maintains strong military commitments with 31 nations to help support their defense efforts and additional defense cooperation commitments with another 29 countries. The Department of Defense conducts more than 170 joint exercises overseas annually, with approximately 40 percent of those having multi-national participation. Additionally, special operations forces conduct approximately 200 Joint Combined Exercise Training iterations annually.[25] Of the forward-stationed and deployed military forces, the Army accounts for about 44 percent of the total; the Air Force for about 30 percent; and the Navy and Marines for about 26 percent.[26]

The Department of Defense (DoD) has a mixture of combat and support units from all three services in each theater. To support its interests and security commitments abroad, the U.S. has forward-stationed and deployed soldiers, airmen, sailors, and marines concentrated in three geographic regions--

- Europe: Military forces in Europe vary from approximately 109,000 to 134,000 personnel depending on the number of deployments in the region, e.g. the Balkans. They include 2 Army divisions (4 brigades), 2.2 Air Force fighter-wing equivalents (FWEs), one Navy carrier battle group (CVBG), and one Marine Amphibious ready group (ARG) with an embarked Marine expeditionary unit (MEU) in the Mediterranean.
- Asia-Pacific: Military forces in Asia consist of over 100,000 personnel. They include 1 Army division (2 brigades) in Korea, 2.2 Air Force FWEs based in Korea and Okinawa, one Navy CVBG, and one ARG with an embarked MEU in the Western Pacific. Additionally, one Army division (2 brigades) and one Separate Infantry Brigade are forward-based in Hawaii and Alaska, and the Air Force has a 1.25 FWE in Alaska.
- Southwest Asia: Before the Persian Gulf War (Operations Desert Shield/Desert Storm), virtually no U.S. combat forces were forward-deployed in the greater Middle East region. With the exception of limited multi-national exercises such as Bright Star in Egypt and the Multinational Force and Observers (MFO) peacekeeping force in the Sinai, U.S. presence was limited to adviser and offshore naval presence. Today's presence includes one Army battalion task force, one Army helicopter battalion, Air Force fighter/attack and support forces, one Navy CVBG, and one ARG with an embarked MEU.[27]

In reality, within all three theaters the forward-deployed forces of the Navy's CVBGs and ARGs are typically only on station about 75 percent of the time because of operational tempo demands.[28]

The principal combat formations identified above account for only about two-thirds of the U.S. military personnel stationed overseas. Most of the remaining overseas-based personnel are assigned to various headquarters staffs, C4I units, logistic support units, and base infrastructure support units. Central America, South America, and Africa have few permanently stationed forces. However, like the other geographic theaters, active and reserve component forces are continually deployed worldwide to participate in security assistance and foreign military interactions (FMIs), periodic multi-national exercises, disaster relief, and peace operations.

To counter the decrease in military forces permanently stationed overseas, the U.S. maintains a large amount of pre-positioned equipment located in strategic locations around the world. In a crisis, pre-positioned equipment allows DoD to rapidly build combat power in a threatened region--far faster than if the equipment for reinforcing units had to be shipped from CONUS. "The idea of pre-positioning equipment stocks for CONUS-based forces first rose to prominence in the 1970s, when DoD concluded that pre-positioning provided a viable way to accelerate troop deployments to Central Europe in the event of a surprise attack."[29] The U.S. has adjusted to the post-Cold War challenges and pre-positioned equipment to other critical regions in the world. In total, there are equipment sets for 10-11 Army and Marine brigades deployed abroad to support contingency operations. Designed to provide a power-projection capability, today's pre-positioned assets include--

- three Army brigade sets in Central and Southern Europe, plus a Marine brigade set in Norway; two Army brigade sets in the Persian Gulf; and another Army brigade set in Korea.
- three Marine brigade sets afloat in maritime pre-positioning ships (MPS) in the Mediterranean, Indian Ocean at Diego Garcia, and Western Pacific at Guam and Saipan.
- one Army brigade set, with support assets and munitions, afloat in ships in the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific.
- USAF support equipment and stocks deployed ashore and afloat in the three theaters.[30]

PUBLIC OPINION

While objectives and resources play instrumental roles in the determination of overall national military strategy, an element of particular importance to democracies is that of public opinion. Public opinion, both domestic and international, can set the very tone of policy discussions and substantially influence the ranking of national priorities. Combined with media influence, it can greatly affect policymakers' decisions even on issues that may not be of vital interest to the country.

The American public historically has difficulty supporting policies or actions that require intervention based solely on protecting interests. The President of the United States traditionally calls upon the moral and legal obligations of the country when campaigning for American public support on actions requiring U.S. military participation. Though the U.S. reserves the right to conduct unilateral military actions in response to crises that affect its interests, government leaders are very much attuned to world opinion. The building of UN or multi-national coalition support provides a consensus that the action is justified and demonstrates international support. However, loss of that support could potentially eliminate the moral and legal base, and might limit America's use of a particular deterrent option. If the U.S. elects to continue military action unilaterally, the loss of international support could damage American prestige overseas and potentially isolate it from the rest of the global community.

During a recent USA Today newspaper poll in November 2001, public support for U.S. ground troops in Afghanistan was at 91%. According to the poll, the overwhelming support by the American people was as a result of the recent terrorist attacks on America and desire for retribution against the perpetrators. This unprecedented support was much higher than it was for U.S. deployments in Bosnia (53% in 1998) and Haiti (54% in 1994).[31] The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon brought Americans together. However, history is replete with examples that demonstrate that public opinion can shift quickly and that patriotic sentiment can diminish rapidly. The perception of legitimacy, both at home and abroad, is critical for prosecuting future global conflicts.

Globalization also provides challenges to future leaders as they pursue a national security strategy. The rapid transmission of information, whether by satellite or the World Wide Web, means that the public has access to news as it happens. This open access of "raw" information makes it an ideal asymmetric tool for an adversary's use in providing disinformation and propaganda to selected target audiences. In the future, an enemy could use this against the U.S. to undermine domestic support, which could ultimately lead to a change in a national security deterrent option or policy.

THE FUTURE STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

The perception of threat is a major determinant in establishing a national strategy. Whether it actually threatens vital interests or not, once the "enemy" is perceived by the general public or international community as a threat, support for measures to counter that threat gain momentum. Thus, the relationship between public opinion and the perceived threat is vitally important when developing national policy.[32] A good example of this was the paranoia that resulted from the fear of world communism during the Cold War and subsequent actions taken by the U.S. in response to that threat.

The country must be prepared to deal with many types of threats that exist along the full-spectrum of war, from nuclear or conventional war to asymmetric threats such as terrorism and information warfare. The Cold War threat, which grouped countries into ideologically defined geopolitical blocs, has ceased to exist. Today, new geostrategic trends have re-shaped the world. Free market-based democratic countries are now emerging from regions which just decades ago were under authoritarian or communist control. Unfortunately, Islamism, ethnic and nationalistic resurgence, and failing nation-states continue to create regional instability in various areas of the world. It is difficult to predict with a high degree of confidence which countries or regions may threaten American interests and security in the future, but it is possible to identify areas where potential threats may arise. Perceived or actual threats from potential peer competitors, rogue nations and various non-state actors will dictate U.S. defense strategy over the next several decades. Some threats may be localized, but others such as the al Queda terrorist network may be global in nature. America's future defense framework requires a posture that defends its way of life while protecting U.S. interests and those mutually supporting interests of its allies.

Europe

Current U.S. policy for Europe is centered on preserving, adapting, and enlarging NATO to make the region more stable, while at the same time building partnership relations with Russia and other countries. European stability is vital to our own security, economic prosperity, and global influence. The bonds of security, trade and friendship continue to grow stronger as the strategic environment changes. Europe is America's leading trading partner with more than sixty percent of total U.S. investment abroad. Commerce between the two continents exceeds one billion dollars per day.[33] It is definitely in America's best interest to ensure Europe remains at peace and a cooperative transatlantic relationship exists with the newly established European Union.

Even after fifty years, the NATO alliance still remains the "preeminent security mechanism for the continent."[34] Changing to meet the realities of a 21st Century Europe, the security organization is increasing its membership, broadening its focus beyond current charter responsibilities, extending into the Central and Eastern Europe region, and addressing concerns that may have a vital impact on the region--such as terrorism, ethnic strife, ballistic missiles and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Once the primary focus of NATO, the former Soviet Union no longer poses a major threat to the stability of Europe. However, its struggle and tumultuous evolution toward a democratic and free market society continue to affect the broader world security environment. Many former Soviet bloc countries have made the transition to democratic societies with minimal problems--several of them becoming integrated with the West both politically and economically. However, other former satellite states and countries which had received Soviet military and economic aid have not fared as well. The vacuum created by the demise of the Soviet Union has given rise to ethnic and nationalistic strife in the Balkans and Central Asia. Additional concern over the possible proliferation of chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, and enhanced high explosive (CBRNE) weapons and expertise from Russia and the other newly independent states has the potential to create conditions that may have devastating effects on the U.S. and its allies. The strategic environment in Europe, though presently secure, will continue to place major demands on U.S. military forces in years to come.

Middle East

Current U.S. Middle East policy focuses on "deterrence of aggression in the Persian Gulf, dual containment of Iraq and Iran, preservation of a Western coalition that includes Arab partners, and encouragement of the Middle East peace process."[35] With the exception of Israel, the U.S. does not have permanent defense arrangements with countries within the region. Though those countries desire a strong defense relationship with America, "political and cultural concerns associated with Islamic fundamentalism dampen their overt support for anything that might appear to indicate a permanent U.S.—or other than Muslim—presence."[36]

The situation in the Middle East is more worrisome than in Europe. Most U.S. allies in the region do not rule by parliamentary democracies, though popular participation in government does vary from state to state. Concerns over the rise in Islamism, radical Arab nationalism, the stability of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, and the Israeli-Palestinian issue will continue to create conditions for unrest. Regional instability may provide opportunities for authoritarian dictators or radical religious leaders to emerge and overthrow the more moderate

Arab regimes. Potential problems with access to oil, increased development of ballistic missile capabilities, the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction, and the support of international terrorism will make the Middle East and the surrounding Persian Gulf an unpredictable and volatile region for the next several decades. Even though America exports less than fifteen percent of its oil from the Persian Gulf,[37] other allies and trade partners are substantially more dependent on oil imported from this region. Restriction of oil from the Middle East could have a devastating effect on the global economic community, thus making this region a vital U.S. and allied interest.

Asia-Pacific

Current U.S. Asia-Pacific policy focuses on "maintaining deterrence and defense in Korea and Northeast Asia, while increasingly pursuing strategic balance and engagement elsewhere in Asia."[38] The economic health of the U.S. is tied to Asia--thirty percent of U.S. exports go to the Far East.[39] Even though it continues to grow in economic strength and plays a critical role in the global markets, Asia has no single collective security mechanism to assist it in maintaining stability within the region. However, to support U.S. defense policy, the U.S. does maintain formal, bilateral military alliances with Australia, Japan, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, and Thailand. It also has a more ambiguous security commitment with Taiwan that results in periodic moments of tension between China and the U.S.[40] In addition, a number of other countries in the region are friendly to America and serve as key trading partners.

Even though the focus has been on the Middle East and the Balkans this past year, this region could generate the greatest concern to the United States over the next several decades. The ideological, ethnic, and religious tensions in North Korea, China, Indonesia, Pakistan, and India, if not handled judiciously, could have serious political, economic, and military consequences for the U.S. and its allies. Since the majority of these countries have ballistic missile and nuclear weapon capabilities, any escalation or provocation could have future catastrophic global effects.

Strong U.S. defense agreements with South Korea and Japan have provided regional stability in Northeast Asia for over fifty years. Recently, reconciliation efforts by South Korean President Kim Dae-jung toward North Korea were undertaken to normalize relations between the two countries but were met by less than encouraging results. The unpredictability and post-Soviet Union viability of North Korea remains a critical concern for the region and could jeopardize Northeast Asian regional constancy. The possibility that North Korea could launch an attack on South Korea remains high. However, the more likely scenario is that the North

Korean government will eventually collapse thus requiring intervention by UN, U.S., and South Korean military forces to restore order or prevent civil war. Tensions with China could also escalate if the Beijing leadership feels it must intervene to stem the flow of refugees into Manchuria.[41]

A weakening of the U.S.-Japan alliance could also pose serious harm to America's interests. Concerns over basing of U.S. personnel in Okinawa and Japan's recent decision to loosen requirements for the use of its military assets outside territorial waters could be a potential sign of a more independent Japan. If Japan no longer feels that it must rely on the U.S. for security, it may increase its military capabilities to protect its interests in the region. This buildup could be perceived as a threat to South Korean and Chinese interests and lead to an escalation in tensions and an increase in offensive military forces. In addition, if security requirements are no longer required in South Korea or Japan, the U.S. may receive pressure from home and abroad to withdraw forward-based forces, thus reducing its ability to project power and influence in the region.

Although the U.S. does not expect to face a peer competitor in the near future, the possibility exists that a hegemon may emerge that could develop sufficient capabilities and influence to threaten future stability in regions critical to the U.S. In particular, China with its vast resources and desire to assert its influence on Asian affairs could eventually emerge as a military competitor in that region. Such action could weaken U.S. influence and undermine security and economic interests in the Asia-Pacific theater. In addition, the possibility of a military attack on Taiwan to recover the "renegade island," as well as the use of force to solidify its claims on the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, are constant concerns that could threaten regional stability and cause disruption of important shipping routes.

Sub-Saharan Africa

The U.S. does not have the same economic and military attachment to Africa as it has with Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. While the African continent offers the world vast untapped natural resources and market potential, businesses have shied away from investing there because of persistent conflict and continuing political instability in some areas. In addition, if tribal and rebellious groups continue fighting, the U.S. or the UN may be forced to deploy troops to the region for humanitarian relief or peace operations.

Though not restricted solely to Africa, increasing challenges and threats emanating from territories of weak and failing states will have a military and economic impact on future U.S. national security strategies. The absence of capable or responsible governments creates a

fertile ground for non-state actors to engage in global terrorism and international criminal activity. Globalization also allows these criminal organizations to transcend continental boundaries, thus providing them with the capability to influence U.S. domestic interests. A stable and democratic Africa could bring the needed capital to the continent and eventually lead to prosperity for the region. Regional stability and strengthening of the newly established democracies will define America's policies in that part of the world for the next several decades.

The Western Hemisphere

The Western Hemisphere remains largely at peace. However, the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. have awakened Americans to the reality that we live in a dangerous and unpredictable world. It also shattered for many a false sense of security they had about living in a country that they perceived as immune to the devastating effects of war. In the future, U.S. domestic security policies will not focus solely on homeland defense and CBRNE counter-measures, but will also focus on engaging threats militarily in countries or regions where they may emanate.

Central America, South America, and Mexico have entered the 21st Century with an unprecedented opportunity to secure a future of stability and prosperity as they establish or expand their free market societies. The authoritarian regimes that controlled the region during the 20th Century--with the exception of Cuba--have given way to democratically elected governments. However, economic instability, corruption, transnational crime, and border tensions could pose future problems for the region. In several areas, the inability of some countries to govern their societies, safeguard their citizens, and prevent their territories from serving as a sanctuary for narco-terrorists and criminal drug trafficking organizations could also pose a threat to stability and place demands on U.S. forces.

Strategic Environment Summary

The dynamic nature of the multi-polar environment will require an extensive commitment of U.S. political, economic, and military assets to protect its interests. Unlike the Cold War period, in which the key geographic regions of competition were well defined, the future strategic environment may impose demands on military forces to protect U.S. interests on virtually every continent and against a wide variety of adversaries. The days of force structuring or posturing military forces to solely confront a specific adversary in a specific geographic area are disappearing. In addition, domestic opinion and international support will be crucial in shaping overseas military policy and determining how the U.S. reacts to threats and unexpected crises. Future interventions could take place against adversaries with a wide range of

capabilities and in distant regions where urban environments, complex terrain, and varied climatic conditions would present major operational challenges to U.S. military forces.[42]

Tomorrow's strategic environment will encompass a variety of threats ranging the full spectrum of warfare. Though the U.S. does not anticipate engaging a global military peer in the next twenty years, it most likely will encounter a regional or transnational threat that could tax its abilities to wage war or maintain peace. If future challenges from these threats go uncontested, U.S. credibility, economic interests, and American well-being could be in jeopardy. In addition to these threats, reduced or constrained funding for the Armed Services could mandate a smaller military presence. As the government sees more of its discretionary budget being eaten away by the rising cost of mandatory domestic programs--such as Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid--the prospects for an increase in defense spending become ever more limited.

ENGAGEMENT OR DISENGAGEMENT?

The lack of a major adversarial threat and the ever-changing strategic environment provides the U.S. with two options from which to choose as it searches for a viable defense strategy for the future. The choices are whether to maintain a robust overseas military presence posture in strategic areas of interest to the U.S. or to pursue a course of selected disengagement that uses forces operating primarily from CONUS to engage threats as they surface. In distinguishing between the two postures, the overseas presence posture primarily focuses on forward deterrence by reinforcing, supporting, and encouraging allies, friends and partners. In contrast, the disengagement posture primarily focuses more on establishing a home-based defense.

Forward deterrence means "discouraging the enemy from taking military action by posing for him a prospect of cost and risk that outweighs his prospective gain."[43] The deterrent value of forward-stationed and deployed military forces is their effect in reducing the likelihood of an antagonist's aggression by a show of force or overt commitment to regional security. Even if an adversary elects to pursue an attack against U.S. interests in spite of visible U.S. presence, the psychological or deterrent aspect of military forces operating in that region does not entirely disappear. It is, however, partly supplanted by another purpose--to resist the adversary's attack by providing the CINC with immediate combat power to conduct offensive and defensive operations, and to serve as a power-projection hub for home-based forces and strategic reserves.

In regards to the disengagement posture, home-based defense means defeating an adversary's attack, economizing forces, and developing conditions favorable for offensive

operations.[44] The defense value of centrally located military forces is their concentrated focus in protecting the homeland from attack, as well as their economizing effect in responding to areas of concern overseas with the proper joint force mix. A reduced overseas military footprint also limits an adversary's ability to physically damage or harm U.S. installations and infrastructure. Perhaps the crucial difference between forward deterrence and home-based defense is that deterrence provides an equalizing effect within a region with the intent to resolve the situation before it becomes a major problem while home-based defense is generally relegated to reacting to a particular event after it happens. Though the disengagement posture still has the capability to conduct deterrent related actions, the President must make a decision on whether forces are to be deployed from CONUS to counter a potential or active threat to U.S. interests. Whichever defense posture the U.S. elects to choose, the optimum strategy requires a posture that protects the country's way of life while defending its interests worldwide and those of its allies.

FORWARD OVERSEAS PRESENCE POSTURE

America's visible overseas military presence and participation in numerous security commitments have given credibility to broad goals of deterrence, war prevention, political and economic stabilization, and influence in regional balance of power configurations across Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East. Overseas presence has also provided the U.S. with the means: to cultivate relationships with foreign governments and improve prospects for U.S. access to key facilities during crises; to improve interoperability through exercises and other bi- and multi-national activities; to provide opportunities for joint and multi-national training in specific climate or terrain conditions; and to provide facilities for maintaining and protecting air and sea lines of communications.[45]

The advantage of overseas presence is that it allows the U.S. "to take the strategic initiative in a particular region—not only in shaping the peace but in resolving conflict."[46] Continuing a forward engaged overseas presence posture implies an enduring and central U.S. role in meeting future challenges to American and international security, while honoring existing security agreements, treaties, and basing commitments. This, in turn, provides the U.S. with facilities to support global surveillance, critical C4I assets, and bases and ports for power-projection forces.

Maintaining an overseas military presence represents a more difficult course for politicians because it involves higher costs and risks. In this option, service members and facilities are more vulnerable to attacks by belligerents who want to harm the U.S. and its interests. There is also concern that the President may be more willing to commit U.S. forces to future international

situations because of their availability. However, this posture substantially reduces prospects for regional confrontations and the possibility of arms buildups because of its stabilizing presence, thus potentially lessening long-term costs and risks. It also reassures friendly and allied countries of America's continued commitment to their respective regions.

The U.S. is amply capable of supporting NATO defense commitments in Europe and threat-based actions in Northeast Asia and the Persian Gulf, but the static nature of these security requirements limits the country's ability to adequately respond to other trouble areas outside the region. Today's forces are "stretched thin by the need to stay ready for major combat while carrying out missions for overseas presence, alliance commitments, strategic shaping, peacekeeping, and minor crisis interventions."[47] Perhaps DoD can alleviate this over-commitment by establishing stricter criteria on when and where military forces are employed. However, the reality is that many of these missions are important to U.S. foreign policy and national security.

The military force structure is not expected to increase in size over the next decade so options on how best to use the current force must be sought. This generates the question whether the current overseas presence posture is still a viable defense strategy based on tomorrow's unpredictable environment and competing demands. Unfortunately, today's approach was designed to meet outdated defense needs, thus creating a mismatch between current requirements (ways) and resources available (means). It leaves the U.S. focused on threat-based planning at a time when traditional threats are fading and peacetime environment shaping requirements are increasing.[48] To remain an effective national security instrument, the ways and means of the overseas presence policy need to be brought into proper balance. If the current policy is not modified, this defense posture could leave the overseas presence policy looking like "an inflexible anachronism, not an able servant of U.S. policy and strategy."[49] America could find itself reacting to events, over-extending commitments, and creating conditions that could eventually lead to future concerns about military preparedness. Increasing this capability in the coming years will help determine whether, and to what degree, U.S. military operations could achieve their strategic goals in the new millennium.

SHOULD THE U.S. PURSUE A POSTURE OF DISENGAGEMENT?

Many people feel that the danger to vital U.S. interests that once justified an extensive overseas presence during the Cold War no longer exists. The lack of a Soviet military threat to NATO has raised doubts about America's need for a forward-based overseas presence. During his 2000 election campaign, George W. Bush criticized President Clinton "for over-extending

U.S. military forces by intervening in places where vital U.S. security interests were not at stake."[50] His initial proposal was to reduce the size of the military and abandon the two MTW strategy.[51] Since being elected, President Bush has temporarily backed away from that position because of the recent attacks on America and his subsequent prosecution of war against global terrorist networks. However, once the campaign against terrorism is completed and a need to tighten the budget is sought, the President could return to his original position of downsizing the overseas military force structure. President Bush, as well as future presidents, may pursue a policy of military disengagement if the public becomes overly concerned about the costs associated with a pervasive overseas presence, complacent about the relatively low threat the U.S. is expected to encounter in the next twenty years, or deluded by the string of recent relatively easy military successes that required only minimal force.

If the strategic environment remains stable and non-threatening, the President and Congressional leaders may place more demands on DoD to further reduce overseas presence or to require allied Nations to assume more of a role in their own security. Still others propose disengaging from Cold War security commitments and exercising greater restraint in intervening or assuming overseas obligations.[52] An increasing concern about U.S. overseas commitments has also stemmed from "a resurgence of ethnic conflicts in Europe, Africa, the former Soviet Union, and elsewhere--complex, intractable, age-old antipathies that seem impossible for outsiders to resolve at a reasonable cost and that do not appear to involve vital American interests."[53]

If a disengagement posture were pursued, the U.S. defensive perimeter would most likely include Alaska, Hawaii, the territories in the Pacific and the Caribbean, and might extend to the northern part of South America in order to protect access to Venezuelan oil. The U.S. would need to continue investing in intelligence, space, ballistic missile and air defenses, and strategic nuclear forces--though arguably with no peer competitor to focus its efforts nuclear deterrence could eventually be afforded a lower priority. Maritime and land-based pre-positioned equipment, power-projection platforms such as airlift and sealift, as well as expanded force entry capabilities will need to increase, in turn, to compensate for a lack of forward-based forces, equipment, and installations.[54] This posture does not limit DoD from retaining key bases and ports overseas as power-projection hubs or deploying military forces to protect U.S. global interests. However, it does curtail many military activities that focus primarily on major or peripheral U.S. interests.

A disengagement posture would potentially be less costly in the near-term, after the U.S. absorbed the initial cost of withdrawing and restructuring forces, transporting and storing

equipment, and closing overseas bases. However, disengagement could have long-term strategic implications: long-standing security alliances could break down; regional power vacuums and arms competitions could emerge; nuclear proliferation could accelerate; and regional security arrangements unfavorable to U.S. security interests could arise.[55]

Future technological advances in weapon systems, sensors, and strategic mobility could provide alternatives to forward-stationing military forces overseas. Long-range precision strike weapons systems and uninhabited combat and surveillance air vehicles could potentially revolutionize future combat by minimizing friendly losses. Some advocates argue that enemy capabilities can be neutralized without putting ground or sea assets in harm's way. This may succeed in some cases, but sole reliance on precision engagement weapons severely limits combatant commanders' options and may generate future problems if technical problems surface or the enemy finds ways to defeat those types of systems.

Since a disengagement posture places increased requirements on power-projection capabilities, overseas basing and port access take on critical importance. Major changes in political support or policies abroad may make it more costly and difficult for the U.S. to maintain power-projection bases or facilities in key countries and regions. But U.S. global interests will not go away just because military forces are pulled out of Europe, Asia or the Middle East. Once withdrawn, the U.S. may find it difficult to re-enter that region in time of crisis. Future adversaries could deny our entry or ability to re-enforce troops already in theater by targeting allied or friendly bases, ports and staging areas with anti-access missiles or area denial weapons. Or U.S. military forces could be denied access to a port or base by a friendly country because it disagrees with their intended use, even if permissive agreements are in place for the use of those facilities.

Of greater concern to national security is that the lack of a permanent overseas presence may incorrectly signal a loss in U.S. commitment to its friends and allies. This could lead to instability in a particular region as countries feel obligated to increase their military force structure or enter into regional security arrangements to make up for the loss of America's stabilizing presence. The lack of permanent U.S. forces could also decrease military exposure to other cultures, lessen the positive impact that forward-stationed troops bring to interoperability, increase the difficulty of forging and operating in coalitions, and greatly decrease U.S. influence in organizations such as NATO or the UN. Potential adversaries may perceive a "fortress America" posture as an opportunity to press their agendas. If the U.S. fails to react, it could open the door for more coercive or aggressive actions that could eventually lead to loss of American influence in the region and possibly armed conflict.

It is not clear whether the financial savings and strategic flexibility gained under this option would be significant enough to offset the increased risks to vital U.S. interests. The military posture postulated under disengagement may pose greater long-term risks than a forward engaged overseas presence strategy. In all likelihood, the U.S. could survive in such a world, but not without major costs to its prosperity and global influence--a price most Americans would find unacceptable. The damaging consequences of disengagement might take years to develop, but there can be little doubt about the ultimate cost to American prestige. In the end, a policy of disengagement will not support current or future U.S. national security objectives or interests.

WHAT IS THE OPTIMAL SOLUTION?

As the U.S. enters the 21st Century, the national military objectives--promoting peace and stability, and defeating adversaries as required--remain credible "ends" as the U.S. encounters continued globalization, emerging international threats and new vital interests. A review of the current overseas presence policy and problems associated with military disengagement underscores the stabilizing effects that U.S. forward-stationed and deployed military forces have on a particular region. Unlike in the past, America can no longer choose whether or not it wants to be involved in international affairs. This doesn't mean that it has to serve as a global caretaker and try to fix all of the world's problems. It does mean, however, that in order to ensure a stable environment for the safeguarding of American interests, the U.S. must continue to serve as a reliable and dependable global partner. To make this happen, it must reorient its overseas military posture to better engage the interests and threats of the new millennium. However, designing a new overseas presence option may prove unsettling to allies and friends--many of whom look to the U.S. for consistency and stability, and fear that change may spell American withdrawal from their respective regions. The challenge is one of forging an overseas presence posture that can perform missions in a way that reassures our friends and allies of America's commitment to their security and stability, and that is flexible enough to safeguard U.S. interests in an uncertain world.

The President must seek a defense posture that provides credible military forces in expanded regions of concern to the U.S. and its allies, and translates into visible and "persuasive messages of peace and restraint."[56] However, the future defense strategy must be flexible enough to transition and engage threats quickly with overwhelming force for rapid conflict resolution and follow-on support of post-conflict activities. In an era of diminishing budgets and less severe threats, a balance must be sought between overseas military

presence, precision weapons systems, and power-projection requirements to achieve full spectrum dominance as envisioned in Joint Vision 2020. No matter what the mix, geographic CINCs need strategic maneuver when initiating flexible deterrent options (FDOs) or engaging potential adversaries in combat operations. Whether that strategic maneuver comes from tailored forces in theater or home-based units, successful engagement of the threat will depend on the military's ability to access the threatened region in a timely manner. Basing agreements, strategic air and sea mobility, precision strike platforms, and force entry capabilities will be key in whether unilateral or multi-national operations succeed in areas where little or no U.S. presence exists.

Tomorrow's defense strategy must continue to focus on protecting the homeland, but also on "consolidating peace in Europe, stabilizing Asia's fluid security affairs in an era of rapid change, and dealing with growing dangers in the Middle East."[57] DoD needs to reassess the rationale for strategic military basing and deployment of forces overseas. Existing theater-based permanent forces should be reassigned or augmented to provide geographic CINCs with the appropriate mix of capabilities or forces to adequately deal with potential threats in their respective regions and support peacetime engagement activities. Tailored forces should also be packaged with a view towards how U.S. operations--peacetime and crisis--are to be integrated with political, economic, and informational options. The restructuring of the overseas presence profile may require a comprehensive shift of military forces to theaters that currently have little U.S. infrastructure or basing rights. In Europe, DoD should further decrease the amount of ground combat forces there to a deployable Army division capable of serving as a reaction force for the CINC, tailor forces to better support NATO expansion initiatives, and reconfigure its theater reception facilities to support a regional hub for power-projection. In Asia and the Middle East, combat units in Korea and the Arabian Peninsula will still be needed to support existing security agreements and to protect U.S. interests. However, conditions requiring U.S. military presence in those areas may eventually go away as adversarial threats in those theaters subside. When and if that happens, DoD will need to reconfigure the facilities for use as strategic hubs for power-projection forces in the Asia-Pacific theater. To support other parts of the globe requiring protection of U.S. interests, an increased Navy and Marine forward-stationed or deployed presence is warranted.

Combatant forces operating in the various theaters remain the best means to protect U.S. interests because of their "24/7" visibility and capability to demonstrate U.S. power quickly. To support future American interests and commitments, this demonstration of global power will require U.S. forces to expand into areas where less infrastructure and sustainment capability

exist, and minimal agreements or U.S. forces reside. Future overseas military forces must also be prepared to rapidly react to crises affecting U.S. interests, support allied and coalition interoperability, support power-projection forces from CONUS, and assist in maintaining stability and democratization of newly designated independent nation-states. Expansion of U.S. presence must also coincide with plans to encourage allies to increase their power-projection capabilities and resolve key interoperability issues. If this doesn't happen, the U.S. will be left carrying too much of the load and overextending itself.[58] Overseas presence and protection of interests is a global partnership. Implementation of this initiative will be key to America's future success in engaging threats or maintaining peace.

Potential second and third order effects in implementing this option may include loss of lead coalition influence in Europe and increased tensions in the Middle East and with China caused by expanded U.S. presence. However, none of these effects should have a major negative impact on the future national security strategy.

The reoriented overseas presence posture offers a viable strategic vision for the new era. It transforms U.S. overseas presence into an instrument that meets the increasing demands dictated by changing U.S. interests and evolving international situations. It also reinforces the policy end-state by providing security and stability through an expanded presence, and if required, preventing or deterring aggression through forward-stationed or forward-deployed forces.

CONCLUSION

America currently enjoys a favorable global strategic environment because it created a strong overseas military presence and proved adept at using it effectively in peace, crisis, and war. As the United States enters the new millennium, it faces a choice: maintain its forward engaged overseas presence posture or draw upon historical precedence and disengage itself from security commitments requiring military presence and focus solely on countering future overseas threats as they occur. Delineating and evaluating the Nation's interests, working within and allocating available resources, balancing domestic, international and Congressional opinion, and properly reading the strategic environment are all required in determining the proper defense posture for the future. Even though the size of the defense budget may actually determine which posture the U.S. eventually enacts, options such as forward overseas presence or disengagement must be carefully evaluated both in terms of short-term costs and long-term policy gains before a decision is made.

To survive and prosper, America needs a strong military to maintain the peace and deal with threats as they develop. The current forward overseas presence posture and the disengagement option do not fully support national security interests and objectives. The U.S. must reorient its present defense posture to better handle future crises and events. Balancing theater-tailored military forces with standoff precision strike weapons and sensors, a more robust power-projection infrastructure, and increased intelligence capability provides the U.S. with greater strategic flexibility in dealing with potential threats that it may encounter in the new millennium. However, this modified defense posture still provides America with a strong overseas military presence that will prove instrumental in maintaining regional stability, promoting vitality in the world economy, minimizing aggressive and coercive adversaries, reducing the potential threat imposed by weapons of mass destruction, and ensuring America's security and prosperity. In the end, as long as the potential for instability and conflict exists in strategic locations where vital U.S. interests are at stake, America will face a powerful rationale for maintaining a strong overseas military presence in the 21st Century.

WORD COUNT = 9986

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